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ABSTRACT

This booklet is a step-by-step guide to developing a grant application for educational project funding. Following a brief review of grant terminology, the booklet discusses sources of funding and the development of federal legislation. A discussion of the actual grant proposal includes such topics as writing the abstract and objectives, the time frame to consider, evaluation, budget, and letters of endorsement. Also examined are the proposal review process, contacts with the funding agency, and getting organizational approval. (Author/LD)

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The Process of Grant Proposal Development

Gerald V. Teague and Betty S. Heathington

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The Process of Grant Proposal Development

By Gerald V. Teague and Betty S. Heathington

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The Grant Process: Its Impact on Education

The increased involvement of federal and state governments in educational institutions at the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels has created a dramatic increase in interest in the grant process. In 1979 alone over $11 billion was available from the U.S. Office of Education (USOE) and the National Institute of Education (NIE) for grants and contracts concerned with educational endeavors. Numerous other agencies, such as the Departments of Agriculture, Transportation, and Defense, have funds available for exploring and upgrading educational programs for varied populations.

Since passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965, the number of federal programs that make funds available for education has grown dramatically. Areas such as vocational education, literacy education, career education, women's educational equity, and education for the handicapped have been addressed through federal funding. Applicants for this federal funding must often present a plan for using the monies solicited, and this plan competes with others for the limited funds available.

The early competition for grants and contracts was not as intense as it is today. Often institutions were able to obtain funds for programs through proposals that were unsophisticated in content and format. Recently, recognition of the value of program planning through the use of needs assessments, goal statements, objectives, evaluation, and dissemination has made project planning and proposal writing more demanding. Much more than a casual pursuit of a new idea or program is required to get a project funded today.

That competition for funding is intense can be seen in figures supplied by various agencies. It is not uncommon for such figures to show that only 20% of the grant applications were approved. In some cases, less than 10% of potential projects are chosen for funding. Today, proposed projects require extensive time for planning and, if funded, extensive time for implementation to assure a quality product.

For many educational institutions, however, the incentive to pursue such external funding is strong. Innovative programs that could not be adequately supported by local funds can be tested and analyzed through funding obtained from federal or state agencies. Instructional materials may be developed through certain programs. Upgrading teacher competencies, a vital concern for many schools, can at times be part of a project funded by outside agencies.

Universities and colleges recognize how vital external funding can be to them. Critical research needed by the education community can be accomplished and graduate education enhanced by supplemental funds from outside agencies. The need for education in other than traditional classroom settings has moved many higher education institutions to become involved in research, training, and service activities for federal and state agencies.

Today grant writing and management are very much a part of educational institutions at all levels. Because of this, educators seek to know more about the techniques and systems involved in the process.

Decisions About Anticipated Projects

When applying for project funding, it is important to address several key questions before other steps are taken, so that time is not wasted on nonproductive efforts.

What projects are needed?

Priorities must be established for an educational unit. For some elementary and secondary schools, needs may include a training program or technical assistance in implementing a particular federal law or state mandate. A satisfactory remedial reading program for large numbers of students may be a priority for another school. Developing and implementing educational equity for certain populations may be yet another need. Whatever the concerns of a particular institution may be, it is necessary to analyze and prioritize such needs before applying for funds.

Many sponsoring agencies have definite criteria that must be met to demonstrate a need. Specified percentages of disabled, underachieving, or minority group students may at times be required of schools that seek funding from various agencies. If the school does not meet such requirements, a well-planned project and clearly written proposal is of little benefit.

Universities must also decide on areas of research priority. Centers and institutes are often effective forums for faculty to pursue common goals in solving educational problems. Adequate support of such centers is necessary for effective project planning and proposal writing.

Without such direction and support from the administration, effective competition for grants and contracts is unlikely.

Project needs must be well documented. Objective data must verify that the stated need has been assessed appropriately. Local, regional, or national problems may be explored, depending on the aims and goals of the sponsoring agency.

Some funding agencies have established guidelines or needs that must be addressed. Even though a need may be a very real one for a locality and may be sufficiently well documented, if it does not fit into the agency framework there is little likelihood that the project will be funded.

Does your institution have the capability for conducting the project?

Often the research, program development, or services needed may be justified, but the expertise needed to conduct the project is not available in the applicant's institution. Funding agencies look closely at the qualifications of key individuals who will be guiding the project. Experience in project management as well as proficiency in the discipline under consideration are weighed carefully by the funding agency.

How can an institution that has never received outside funds be successful in getting grant money? Plans must be made to overcome the deficiency. Pilot studies may be initiated, without funding, to help faculty gain needed experience. University-sponsored programs to support small research projects for inexperienced faculty may be a solution. Consultants with proper expertise may be hired to help with both the planning and implementation of a project. A specialist may be hired to perform work on the project. In these and other ways, persons with the particular expertise needed for the project can demonstrate to the sponsoring agency that the project will be run by capable personnel.

Is the idea supported by significant people?

Many sponsoring agencies are currently stressing this aspect of project planning because they recognize that without support from key individuals, a project may be doomed to fail.

Parents, community leaders, teachers, administrators, or other groups may be needed to implement a program. These individuals should be included in the planning of the project to provide input and direction. Their support will usually be forthcoming if they have had a voice in the beginning phase.

Is the proposed project feasible?

While some projects may be necessary and worthwhile, they simply cannot be implemented. Data may not be available or obtainable, the time frame may not be long enough to provide sufficient data, or the cost of the equipment needed may be beyond the funding capabilities of the agency. At each step in the planning process, the feasibility of tasks must be considered.

Answers to the four questions above should provide direction and emphasis to an educational institution as projects are considered for external funding. These answers are necessary before further steps can be taken in the grant process.

Grant Terminology

In order to engage in the grant process, one must understand the language that appears in program announcements, application guidelines, and agency regulations. Although much of the jargon is derived from government documents, the language of grants spans the private as well as the public source domain. Many of the words are common, but an understanding and appreciation of their grant and contract connotation is vital if the applicant is to comprehend and effectively utilize the language. Below are 25 words and definitions with which the grant seeker should be familiar.

A-95 review: A requirement for certain federal programs, whereby a state or regional agency reviews a project, determines whether or not it is a duplication of another project in the state or region, and matches the project with the state or regional master plan.

Appropriation: The amount of funds authorized by Congress allowing federal agencies to make awards under previously legislated programs.

Assurances: Statements concerning institution or organization compliance with Civil Rights, Title IX, Section 504 guidelines, Human Subjects, etc. Assurances are required with many proposal applications.

Authorization: Congressional legislation establishing a specific program. Funding limits on appropriations may be set, but budget authority is not provided.

Boilerplate: Standard parts of a proposal that may include assur-

ances, cover sheet, applicant's organizational history, and facilities description.

Budget: Estimated cost of conducting the proposed project, consisting of direct and indirect costs, matching contribution (cost sharing), and justification.

Cost Sharing: Investment in the project by the applicant either through cash outlay or in-kind support (overhead, equipment, personnel services). The required percent of cost sharing is sometimes stipulated by the funding agency.

Contract: Work order initiated by and reflecting the interests of the sponsor in which need, objectives, procedures, cost range, and project period have already been defined.

Direct Costs: Expenses directly associated with carrying out the sponsored project. Included are personnel salaries and fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, phone, postage, computer, printing costs, etc.

Field Reader (Reviewer): A professional person who contracts with the funding agency to review and evaluate proposals.

Grant: An award of funds without a fully defined set of terms and conditions for conducting the project. Specific need, format, outcomes, and period of performance are determined largely by the applicant.

Grant/Contract Period: The period between "effective date" and "expiration date," during which time items may be charged against the grant or contract as specified in the award notification.

Grant/Contract Officer: The official appointed by the sponsor to be responsible for the administration of the award and award modifications related to costs.

Indirect Costs (Overhead): The expenses indirectly associated with the sponsored project. Included are administrative expenses, utilities, physical plant maintenance, library facilities, etc. They are usually expressed as a percentage of either total direct costs or salaries and wages. Rates are negotiated between applicant organization and the funding agency.

Negotiation: A verbal or written interaction between an organization or institution and a funding agency designed to modify tasks or budget items outlined in the original proposal.

Preapplication: A brief proposal submitted to an agency. If it is approved, a detailed, expanded proposal will be prepared and submitted.

Project Director (Principal Investigator): The individual responsible for supervising the sponsored program for the funded agency.

Project Officer: The official appointed by the sponsor who is responsible for supervising the programmatic aspects of the project.

Request for Proposal (RFP): An invitation detailing project requirements issued by a funding agency in response to which applicants may submit a proposal.

Seed Money: Funds made available for internally funded pilot projects in preparation for application for external funding.

Sole Source: Only one organization or institution (because of its particular expertise) is invited to submit a proposal on a specific project to a funding agency.

Solicited Proposal: A request for a written plan (proposal) from an institution or organization for specified tasks outlined by a funding agency.

Sponsored Research: Research funded by an outside agency either through a grant or contract.

Supplemental Agreement: Modifications to the original award, such as no-cost extension of time, additional funding, or continuation.

Unsolicited Proposal: A written proposal submitted to a funding agency without that agency's formal announcement that it is seeking such a proposal.

The terms given above are those most often used in discussions concerning the grant or contract process. An awareness and understanding of this terminology is basic to inquiry and competition. Other terms will require clarification and explanation from those familiar with the field of grant writing and management.

Sources of Funding

Finding the most appropriate source of funding for a project is an important and time-consuming activity. Organizations are fortunate when they have access to an office or person responsible for maintaining a grant library, monitoring grant information sources, and assisting with the identification of potential sources of support. If, however, sources must be identified without such assistance, three questions may serve as guidelines in the search.

1. What are the available sources of funding?
2. Where can information on the funding organization be obtained?
3. What specific information is needed to determine the appropriateness of a particular funding source for a proposed project?

Financial assistance can come from a variety of sources, including federal and state governmental agencies, private foundations and community trusts, businesses and industries, professional associations, and individuals. The federal government provides by far the largest portion of support, while foundations provide substantially less but significant amounts. The remaining sources account for a small part of the total funds dispersed. When seeking support for any project, however, no possible source should be dismissed.

Three reference volumes and two subscription publications constitute the primary sources of information for federal, state, and foundation funding. They are available in many public libraries. Numer-

ous journals, brochures, newsletters, bulletins, and annual reports (see list at end of chapter) will also guide the grant seeker in identifying potential funding agencies.

For project support from the federal government, one should first consult the *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA)*. Over 1,000 programs administered by more than 50 federal agencies are listed in the *CFDA*. Published annually and updated twice a year, the *CFDA* describes 16 types of financial (e.g., formula and project) and non-financial (e.g., property and equipment use) assistance available to various state and local governmental agencies, nonprofit firms, community groups, educational agencies, and individuals. Grant seekers will find the *CFDA* an invaluable tool in identifying programs germane to their project goals and obtaining general information on particular programs. The program description section of the *CFDA* provides information on the following items:

- Title and catalogue identification number
- Federal agency administering the program
- Legislation authorizing the program
- Objectives and goals of the program
- Types of assistance offered under the program
- Uses and restrictions placed upon the program
- Eligibility requirements
- Application and award process
- Assistance consideration
- Post-assistance requirements
- Number of obligations for the past, current, and future fiscal year
- Kinds of activities previously funded under the program
- Regulations, guidelines, and literature relevant to the program
- Information contacts at headquarters, regional, and local offices
- Related programs based upon program objectives and uses
- Examples of funded projects
- Review criteria

To aid in the search, a guide to using the *CFDA* is provided, along with four indexes (agency, functional, popular name, and subject) useful in pinpointing specific programs of interest. The appendices provide data on pertinent authorizing legislation, applicable govern-

ment circulars, abbreviations and acronyms, agency addresses, and application deadlines. Many states publish a catalogue of state assistance programs that provides similar information. The catalogue usually can be obtained at the state office of planning or research.

When researching the private sector, the *Foundation Directory* is perhaps the most helpful document. It is the primary source of information concerning purposes and activities of the larger, more active foundations, and it provides a picture of the concentration of grants in certain geographic and interest areas. Of the estimated 26,000 philanthropic foundations, the *Directory* lists nearly 3,000 that either have assets of over $1 million or that annually grant in excess of $100,000. Pertinent funding agency information provided in this reference includes:

- Name and address
- Donors
- Purpose and activities
- Financial data (including assets number of grants, and funding range)
- Officers and trustees
- Application instructions
- Geographic limitations

Data are arranged alphabetically and by field of interest (e.g., health, education), by state and city, by donors, and by administrators. Supplements to the annual *Directory* are published semiannually.

The *Annual Register of Grant Support* is a comprehensive list of government agencies, foundations, business and industry, professional associations, and special-interest groups that provide financial assistance. Support programs detailed in the *Register* span the continuum of interests from scientific research to competitive awards and prizes, including support for program formulation and implementation, travel and foreign exchange programs, publications, fellowships, equipment purchases, and construction of facilities. Each program is described in terms of the information provided in the *CFDA* and the *Foundation Directory*, with additional data on ratio of applications to grants awarded and a description of foreign as well as domestic programs. Sources are listed according to their principal interests and

are cross-referenced by type of grant and applicant eligibility. Four indexes (subject, organization and program, geographic, and personnel) help the researcher locate suitable sources of support. Because it covers so many different types of programs, the *Register* is a valuable grant research tool that should be utilized in conjunction with the other sources.

Two daily publications announcing federal government grant and contract opportunities respectively are the *Federal Register* and the *Commerce Business Daily*. These two documents list many of the programs or projects for which federal monies are awarded. Appearing every federal working day and indexed monthly, the *Federal Register* contains: 1) proposed rules and regulations for newly authorized programs on which public comment is solicited; 2) final rules and regulations governing established programs; 3) modifications to current rules and regulations; and 4) notices providing specific guidelines and application information for programs noted in the *CFDA*. Information on the subsequent day's highlights is obtainable by phone from the office of the *Federal Register*. Because the *Federal Register* announces grants and not contracts, it is of most use to public agencies and nonprofit organizations.

A listing of procurement invitations from the federal government is published daily in the *Commerce Business Daily* (*CBD*). This is an especially vital source of information for profit organizations, but does contain contract offers for which nonprofit organizations can apply. Each request for proposal (RFP) entry gives a brief description of the task, estimated personnel effort, cost range, and the contact for obtaining the RFP. Since requests for proposals are normally one-time activities reflecting the interest of the federal government, and because the time between the announcement and proposal due date is relatively short (between 30 and 90 days), many nonprofit organizations do not rely heavily on the *CBD* for potential support.

Numerous periodicals are available to the grants seeker free of charge and are excellent sources of vital information. Most federal and state agencies publish helpful pamphlets that describe their programs and application procedures. Examples of such federal publications are the National Institute of Health's *Guide for Grants and Awards*, the

National Science Foundation's *Bulletin*, and the National Endowment for the Humanities' *Humanities*. According to the Freedom of Information Act, every federal agency is required to provide information and offer assistance. They must therefore respond to requests for information about program priorities and procedures. In addition, the Federal Information Centers, which were established to disseminate information on the federal government's services, may be utilized.

Subscriptions to periodicals providing information abstracted from the *Federal Register*, *Commerce Business Daily*, and other government publications include *Federal Grants and Contracts Weekly*, *Government R & D Reports*, *Federal Research Report*, *Federal Notes*, *Education Daily*, and *College and University Reports*. Since some subscriptions can be expensive, inquire about rates prior to placing a subscription order.

Two computerized search services are also available. The National Technical Information Service is a source of information on all federally sponsored projects, and the Smithsonian Science Information Exchange collects information on federal and nonfederal agencies. Both produce excellent abstracts for a nominal fee.

Foundations also disseminate free literature and guides about their programs. For example, the Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller Foundations will forward upon request, free of charge, their quarterly newsletters, annual reports, and application guidelines. Periodicals pertaining to the private sector also furnish valuable hints on approaching foundations and formulating proposals. These include such publications as *Grantsmanship Center News*, *Foundation News*, and *Grants Magazine*. The Foundation Center, which has three locations across the country, is a depository of comprehensive information on foundations. It houses references available for the public's use without charge and also offers a computerized information research service for a fee.

Newspapers, association newsletters, and scholarly journals often provide leads to funding sources. Information supplied in these publications should be used only as a supplement to personal contact with potential funding sources. The most current, accurate, and comprehensive information can best be supplied by the funding agency itself.

Information Sources

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance,
Federal Register, and
Commerce Business Daily
Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, DC 20402

Foundation Director, Edition 7
Columbia University Press
136 South Broadway
Irvington, NY 10533

Annual Register of Grant Support
Marquis Academic Media
200 East Ohio St.
Chicago, IL 60611

The Foundation Center
888 Seventh Ave.
New York, NY 10019
and
1001 Connecticut Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20036

Foundation News
P.O. Box 783
Chelsea Station
New York, NY 10011

Grantsmanship Center News
The Grantsmanship Center
1015 West Olympic Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90015

Federal Notes
P.O. Box 986
Saratoga, CA 95070

Federal Research Report
Business Publishers, Inc.
P.O. Box 1067
Blair Station
Silver Springs, MD 20910

Government R & D Reports
MIT Station
P.O. Box 284
Cambridge, MA 02139

Grants Magazine
227 West 17th St.
New York, NY 10011

College and University Reports
Commerce Clearing House, Inc.
4025 W. Peterson Ave.
Chicago, IL 60646

Federal Grants and Contracts Weekly,
Education Daily, and
Report on Education Research
Capitol Publications, Inc.
Suite G-12
2430 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20037

National Technical Information Service
U.S. Department of Commerce
Springfield, VA 22161

Smithsonian Science Information Exchange, Inc.
Room 300
1730 M St., N.W.
Washington, DC 20036

The Legislative Process

Since the competition for monies for federal programs is so closely tied to the legislative process, an understanding of the development of federal legislation is needed to understand the grant process. When regulations and RFPs appear respectively in the *Federal Register* and the *Commerce Business Daily*, the events and processes that led to those announcements began with Congress. At several points during the legislative and regulations phases, educational organizations and institutions can sometimes have an impact on the types of programs that will eventually be available for funding. Even though an educational institution may never wish to attempt to influence a funding program, the insight gained by understanding the process will aid in early identification of forthcoming programs and provide hints on securing funds from the agency or foundation.

Basically, the introduction and enactment of a federal bill follow 15 steps, with possibilities for addition, deletion, or modification at nearly every level.

Step 1: A bill is introduced by a member of either house. Ideas for bills may originate with the member, a congressional committee on which the member sits, the President, a special interest group, or a constituent. The legislative proposal introduced may take the form of a bill or a resolution.

Steps 2 and 3: Referral for consideration by a committee(s) and its subcommittee(s) having jurisdiction over the particular type of legislation constitutes the second and third steps. If no action is taken on the

bill, it simply dies. Approximately 10% of the bills introduced come out of the committee. Presidential pressure, powerful congressional advocates, or broad public interest is normally necessary to insure attention of the committee to a specific bill.

Step 4: A public hearing is then held with public testimony as well as discussion of the issues by government officials solicited to aid the committee's deliberations.

Step 5: Following the hearings, the committee critically reviews, modifies, and amends the original bill.

Step 6: This process is termed *mark-up* and results in a proposed bill ready for committee vote.

Step 7: If the vote is affirmative, the bill is "reported"; that is, a background paper is prepared detailing the legislation to be considered. If the bill originated in the House, it is referred to the Rules Committee to determine the length of time permitted for debate and whether or not amendments may be offered.

Step 8: The bill is assigned a number and placed on the calendar.

Step 9: Each house debates each bill in order, unless a provision to consider it out of sequence is passed on the floor.

Step 10: Following debate and possible amendments, a vote is taken.

Step 11: Should the vote be favorable, the bill is sent to the other body for consideration.

Step 12: Each house may pass the bill with different provisions. In this case a conference committee is formed, consisting of members from both houses, to iron out the differences.

Step 13: The final compromised version of the bill is then voted upon by both houses.

Step 14: The President signs the bill.

Step 15: The bill becomes law.

After Step 13, if the President decides to take no action within 10 days, the bill automatically becomes law. A veto by the President can be overridden by a two-thirds vote of both houses.

Once a bill is enacted, the appropriate federal agency is charged with the task of developing guidelines and procedures to govern the program implementing the law. This legislation is the basis for rules

and regulations appearing in the *Federal Register* and programs described in the *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance*.

How can an individual or organization influence legislation and program policy? First, the concept behind introduction of a bill or RFP can be generated by an individual. A need can be identified or a problem specified, and it can be brought to the attention of a congressional or agency representative.

Second, groups can lobby for their own interests. They can know and become acquainted with the legislative aides on personal staffs and committees. They can encourage supporters to express their opinions in writing.

Third, groups can present oral or written testimony during committee hearings. There they have a chance to insure that their views become public record.

Fourth, groups can respond to the request for comments concerning program rules and regulations solicited in the *Federal Register*. Comments will be addressed and may effect change favorable to the organization.

The Proposal

The regulations in the *Federal Register* will provide the framework for the sequence and content of many proposals. One should pay careful attention to that section of the regulations that outlines the necessary information to be addressed in the narrative of the proposal. For foundations or other organizations that do not publish regulations, their guidelines will specify the type of information that should be included in the proposal.

While the format will vary from one agency to another, certain basic information is usually requested by a sponsor. Typical components include the abstract, introduction, needs statement, objectives, procedures, personnel, facilities, time frame, evaluation, dissemination, budget, resumes, and letters of endorsement. It must be emphasized that the specific components required by the funding agency are those which should guide the proposal writing if they are different from those listed above. Agency requirements may be modifications or a condensation of the above list. It is essential that the written format of the proposal correspond to sponsor guidelines.

Abstract

Although seemingly small and unimportant, the abstract is often a significant part of the proposal. The reviewer will probably read this section first to gain an overview of the proposed project. Interest often can be captured at this point if the abstract is written in clear, concise terms. The content should center around the objectives and

purposes of the project and how they will be achieved. Any unique characteristics of the project that might be of particular interest to the funding agency should be mentioned and highlighted.

Introduction

In some way, the reader must become acquainted with the topic. A limited explanation of the subject, the theory behind it, and the efforts that have been devoted to it in the past are typical kinds of explanations. This section must demonstrate to the reader or reviewer that the applicant has a familiarity with current thinking on the topic and an awareness of how this project relates to present trends.

It should be emphasized that the reader or reviewer often has limited time to evaluate a proposal. As discussed later in the section on the review process, the reader may have only a few hours to assess a proposed project and its ramifications. It is imperative that the introduction not overload the reader with extraneous material. The most relevant citations of studies, laws, or theories should be presented in precise terms. The reader must be oriented to the proposed plan and then be led to the next section of the proposal.

Needs Statement

The needs statement explains why the program, services, or research is needed at this time, or in this particular school, or for this particular population. This is not the place for esoteric or global humanistic assertions. Needs should be well documented with objective evidence provided: evidence that can be documented in the literature, in statistical data, or through a needs assessment conducted especially for the project. Procedures used to collect the data in a needs assessment should be clearly outlined.

Needs may be local, state, or national. The difference between the current situation and the desired one must be stated. Schools often find that up-to-date and accessible information such as achievement test scores, census data, or educational projections is critical if competitive funding is to be pursued.

Cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains are often addressed when needs are expressed for populations. Literature surveys are part of a substantiation for research studies.

The needs section should establish a clear link between needs and the project to be funded. The sponsoring agency must be convinced that there is a measured or verifiable need for the activities described in the remainder of the proposal.

Objectives

The purposes, the aims and the goals of the project are contained in this section. In establishing objectives, it is essential that project planners be specific. Projected outcomes must be established before the full project design can be conceptualized.

Projects often have several objectives. Each one should be stated in exact terms with careful consideration given to their relation to other parts of the proposal. For example, evaluation and procedures should be set for each objective stated; therefore, objectives must be stated in such a way that they can be linked directly and explicitly to evaluation and procedures.

An objective may refer to populations (behaviors), processes, products, or a combination of these elements. Each will entail a slightly different approach in stating the objectives.

Procedures

The activities or methodologies to be employed must be carefully detailed. Reviewers are especially concerned about the relevance of each of these to the project objectives. Some activities may have no easily perceived link to the purposes of the project. This relationship must be carefully delineated in the proposal.

Included in the procedures section should be such items as types of training to be provided (when, where, how much, what kind), how participants will be selected, and the anticipated content of products and how they will be developed. The elements included are, of necessity, specific to the type of project (behavior, process, or product). The most important guideline concerning the procedures section is that it must describe how the project will be carried out.

Personnel

The personnel section of the proposal should convince the reviewer

that the project team members have the expertise to conduct the proposed activities. A brief description of each team member should be prepared, indicating his or her professional experience and how it will contribute to the project.

The personnel section may also include the relationships among the various team members. The lines of authority, the areas of responsibility, and the areas of expertise may be included.

The project director should be carefully chosen. It is beneficial to name someone who not only has expertise in the discipline being addressed, but also has experience in project management or has demonstrated capability for handling fiscal responsibilities. Often the project director is a senior staff member whose background includes direction of a major project.

The expertise of the project staff must be related to the project under consideration. Having a nationally recognized person on the project staff is of little value unless that person's capabilities have been demonstrated in the key areas of the project.

Elements that should be addressed in the personnel section include the educational backgrounds and publications of team members as well as a list of other projects they have worked on. While complete resumes are usually included in the appendix, the personnel section should highlight significant accomplishments of the staff that are directly related to the project.

Facilities

The emphasis in this section should be on those institutional facilities that would be beneficial in conducting this project. Some institutions maintain a file or inventory of all of their facilities for just such purposes.

Facilities such as libraries, special service units, research apparatus, laboratories, conference rooms, or media equipment may be described in a proposal. In some cases, specialized facilities may be of little importance to the success of a project; in others, certain facilities will be essential for particular activities.

Time Frame

The time frame should specify dates for completion of all activities

or tasks and their sequence and interdependence. The time line serves as a guide and reference during the implementation phase. The ability to stay on schedule is one of the most important aspects of project management.

For contracts, sponsoring agencies often request frequent progress reports. Monthly, bimonthly, or quarterly reporting may be required to be sure the institution or organization is adhering to strict time allotments.

Evaluation

Program evaluation has received increased attention in the past 10 years. Today, an important part of an educational institution's project is a well-designed plan for evaluation. Funding agencies are now stressing the importance of a proper assessment of the achievement of project goals and objectives.

Evaluation can be formative (process) and summative (product). Attention to both kinds of evaluation will enhance the proposal. Formative evaluation provides feedback as a program progresses; it facilitates appropriate decision making on a day-to-day basis. The program manager may conduct the formative evaluation of a project. Task completion, adequacy of staff, and adequacy of facilities may be considered during formative evaluation.

Summative evaluation measures program attainments. The outcome of a project and the achievement of goals are assessed. It is beneficial at times to have an external evaluator, someone not associated with the project staff, to assist in formative evaluation.

When objectives and intended outcomes are planned, the methods for assessing the attainment should also be specified. These must be detailed, measurable ways of determining program success.

Dissemination

To be useful, research results must be disseminated. This section of the proposal should describe who will be informed of project results, which results will be reported, and in what form the results will be disseminated. Possible target audiences for research results include the agency that funded the program, professional colleagues who have

an interest in the project, project directors investigating similar areas of research, and community members who may be instrumental in bringing about change indicated by the results.

Results may be disseminated in the form of final reports, professional publications, or papers presented at state or national professional conferences. The grant seeker should be aware of the costs associated with such dissemination and include them in the proposal budget.

Budget

The budget portion of the proposal should relate directly to the objectives and activities of the project. The narrative section should set the stage for items included in the budget.

Although format will vary from one funding agency to another, there are certain standard items to be considered:

Personnel: A list of all those people who will work on the project, the percent of time commitment for each person, and the cost.

Fringe Benefits: A percent applied to salaries of the project personnel that covers items such as insurance, unemployment compensation, retirement, etc.

Consultants: Those individuals who will be hired for their expertise on a short-term arrangement, their per day payment, and the number of days they will be employed.

Travel/Per Diem: A breakdown of local and out-of-town travel requirements with anticipated mileage, destinations, number of trips, and costs.

Supplies: The cost of those items that will be necessary to implement the project, such as postage, phone, duplication, etc.

Indirect/Overhead: A percent added to cover an institution's expenses, such as bookkeeping, payroll handling, utility cost, etc.

A typical budget for a proposal follows:

SAMPLE BUDGET

PERSONNEL		
Project Director — Mary Brown		
100% of 12 months	$22,000	
Research Assistant — James Smith		
50% of 12 months	7,000	
Secretary — to be selected		
20% of 12 months	2,500	
		$31,500
FRINGE BENEFITS		
(to include Social Security, hospitalization, retirement, and unemployment compensation)		
17% of personnel costs		5,355
CONSULTANTS		
Edward Jones — 12 days @ $100/day	1,200	
Robert Williams — 8 days @ $100/day	800	
		2,000
TRAVEL/PER DIEM		
Round-trip airfare to Chicago	300	
Accommodations for 3 days @ $35/day	105	
Local travel — 2,000 miles @ 18¢/mile	360	
		765
SUPPLIES		
Office Supplies	450	
Communication (phone, postage)	600	
Duplication	200	
		1,250
TOTAL DIRECT COST (TDC)		40,870
INDIRECT COST (50% of TDC)		20,435
TOTAL REQUESTED		$61,305

Resumes

A resume should be included for each key member of the project staff. Areas to be addressed may include educational and professional backgrounds, publications, papers and presentations, associations and certifications, and other significant accomplishments.

Letters of Endorsement

Knowing that well-known people in the field feel the project is worthwhile may influence proposal reviewers; therefore, letters of endorsement are usually included in the proposal. Often proposed project activities cannot be implemented if key people in an organization are not supportive of them. Letters from these individuals will demonstrate the endorsement of those in a leadership role.

The letters should reveal an understanding of the purposes of the project, the role of the endorser in the project, and the endorser's desire to have the project implemented.

Proposal Writing

Determining the precise contents of a proposal is only a part of the preparation process. The actual writing of the proposal is sometimes a complicated task. Certain organizational procedures have been found to be effective. While these strategies may have limitations, for many proposal writers they have proven helpful.

Step 1. If several individuals with particular expertise are needed for a project, the writing and input efforts of these people must be coordinated in some manner. Certainly a first step is to bring the entire group together to discuss the proposed project. At this time it is crucial that all members agree on the overall objectives to be accomplished. Activities to reach those objectives may be discussed at this meeting or subsequent meetings of the group. At these initial meetings the overall design of the project will emerge, with each individual contributing particular expertise to define and refine the project.

Step 2. When sufficient planning and exploration of possible alternatives have been pursued in group meetings, the writing duties can begin. While the writing of a proposal may seem like an enormous task, it can be a reasonable effort when properly orchestrated.

Grant seekers vary in their techniques for assigning writing tasks. One effective way is to have the individuals with particular expertise write certain sections applying to their specialty area. Another way is to assign certain parts of the proposal to different individuals. Either way, it is often beneficial (but more time consuming) for several members to participate in the writing. The benefit derives from the added expertise, the generation of ideas, and the constructive critiques by colleagues.

When the writing assignments are made, it is necessary to establish target dates for completion of the writing. Usually rough drafts are the first products to be shared with team members.

Step 3. As the parts are gradually added, the various team members may read drafts and make comments. If possible, colleagues not associated with the project can review and provide feedback. At this step clarifications, additions, expansions, or modifications can be made.

Step 4. After additions, deletions, and modifications are made regarding content, the typing and editorial work can begin. Since parts have been written by different individuals, it is helpful if one person does the editorial work on the proposal, tying together the various parts and making the narrative flow smoothly. Final typing and duplication activities complete the proposal preparation process.

Review Process

Although specific review procedures vary somewhat among federal agencies and often widely among nongovernmental funding sources, a basic approach is common to most. Becoming aware of the general scheme is necessary before the particular processes can be understood. A typical sequence for proposal review by nearly all funding sources includes these stages:

1. Perusal of *preliminary* proposal by funding source staff (not all agencies request a preliminary proposal)
2. Comments to applicant with suggestion to submit or not submit full proposal
3. Receipt of formal application by published deadline date
4. Initial examination by funding source staff to determine "responsiveness" of application (consistency with funding source's area of interest, eligibility of applicant, proper format, inclusion of required forms, signature of authorized official)
5. Scrutiny of responsive proposals by reviewer and/or review committee
6. Ranking of favorable proposals in suggested order of funding
7. Recommendation to director and/or advisory council to either a) approve as proposed, b) approve pending specific modifications, c) disapprove, or d) defer until additional information is obtained
8. Negotiating terms and conditions
9. Making the award

Virtually all new proposals received by a federal agency undergo what is known as a "peer review." The general procedure, after the

initial review by agency staff, is to submit proposals to a panel of content and design experts, normally composed of three to five agency and nongovernment personnel, for critique. Reviewers are chosen according to agency policy from a pool, based upon the type of expertise required by the project and the number of applications received.

Each member of the panel usually receives between five and 20 proposals to review individually. Sometimes a subsequent meeting of the panel allows discussion between reviewers before a final rating is given. In other cases, reviewers are asked not to discuss proposals read with other panel members. Site visits are sometimes necessary, but they are normally reserved for very large programs or construction projects.

Reviewer ratings are submitted to the agency staff charged with compiling ratings. They, in turn, rank all proposals recommended for funding upon the basis of the scores. Rating schemes use either a "poor to excellent" code or a numeric scale and often rely heavily on reviewers' narrative comments. Award decisions are the prerogative of the agency head or advisory council after considering agency priorities and geographic considerations, if applicable. Recommendations of the review panel are not binding but are generally observed. Funds are allocated until exhausted, beginning with the highest-rated proposal.

Evaluation criteria are published for each program solicitation and are used by the reviewers. Specific questions are often posed and weights are assigned to proposal components. Applicants would do well to employ the criteria as a guide, addressing each question and emphasizing heavily weighted sections. Basically, evaluation criteria cover the following categories:

1. Importance and clarity of problem and its relationship to agency goals
2. Impact of project on specified areas of need
3. Attainability of proposed objectives
4. Soundness of design and methodology
5. Adequacy of project administration
6. Capability of project personnel
7. Appropriateness of facilities and resources
8. Suitability of evaluation procedures
9. Reasonableness of budget

Foundation reviewers look for essentially the same types of things as do federal review panels. However, they are guided by different principles, and, thus, view the application from another perspective. Since foundations are prohibited by law from supporting for-profit organizations, they must insure the nonprofit status of the applicant. Foundations also emphasize the congruence of the proposed activity to their particular purposes. Because they must answer to their own board of directors and are not accountable to the public, peculiar conditions and restrictions may be imposed, such as a particular geographic location or religious affiliation of the applicant. Of vital concern to the funding agency are the credibility of the applicant and the reputation of the project staff. Whatever the outcome of the project, it will bear the name of the foundation and reflect upon its image.

Contacts with Funding Agency

There are times when contact with the funding agency can be extremely beneficial to those who seek external funding. Contact may be made either by letter, telephone, or personal visit; the type of contact is dependent on proximity to the office of the funding agency, the type of information desired, and the amount of time one has for getting the desired information.

If a funding agency has very broad project outlines or accepts unsolicited proposals, it may be worthwhile either to call or visit someone on the staff to explain a research idea and explore the interest of the agency in funding such a project. The agency may indicate that it has no interest in the idea and valuable time will be saved.

Further contact with an agency is usually beneficial as the guidelines are read and the proposal is developed. Questions concerning exact meanings, more specific guidelines, and other information will undoubtedly arise when the grant seeker begins writing the proposal. Calls to a designated individual will not only answer questions but will also provide an "inside" contact with the funding agency. It is usually much easier to keep abreast of current program trends in a funding agency when personal contact can be established with an agency staff member.

Contact with the funding agency is also important when a proposal has been rejected. The grant seeker has a right to know on what basis the proposal was turned down: budget, personnel, project design, etc. Having access to such information will help the grant seeker when

either resubmitting the proposal to the same agency in the next fiscal year or when submitting it to other agencies. The grant seeker may request a copy of the reviewers' comments; federal funding agencies are required to provide such information to those who have prepared proposals.

Personal contacts with foundations are extremely critical. Since foundations have wide latitude in determining what types of projects they will fund, a personal explanation of purposes and needs may be helpful. Many foundations suggest a one-page letter of introduction as a beginning step to proposal writing.

Organization Approval

Proposal guidelines call for the signature of the applicant's authorized representative. This signature is affixed after organizational routing or approval procedures have been completed. In signing the application, the official representative is endorsing the proposed project and is approving the use of the organization's facilities and resources for the activity. Review by a single grant specialist in the institution applying for the grant is sometimes all that is needed. More often, the process involves several persons, each responsible for a specific component of the application.

In an institution of higher education, a typical routing procedure generally includes review and approval of specific aspects by the following persons or offices:

- Project director: Program design
- Department chairperson: Availability of departmental faculty, staff, space, and materials
- College dean: Commitment of college personnel and facilities
- Contracts and grants administrator: Budget accuracy, cost-sharing, forms completion, and legal implications
- Director/dean of research: Involvement of human subjects in research activity
- Chancellor: Compliance with institutional policies
- President: Signature of authorized institutional representative
- Board of regents: Formal approval

Responsibilities are not always this clear-cut, and they can involve several individuals, depending in part on the size of the institution. Each institutional official should review the entire application for soundness, completeness, and appropriateness for institution affiliation.

Regardless of the origin of a proposal from a local education authority (LEA), it will need the approval of all personnel included, e.g., school building principal, teachers association president. Normally, the system's central administration will employ a contract/grant specialist, perhaps as the director of an office of federal and state programs. This individual will coordinate proposal applications for individual schools or the district itself. The routing and review process for each system varies considerably, but it is generally coordinated by the contract/grant specialist, who insures that the application package is complete and accurate. Prior to routing to the superintendent for signature, the application may be sent to an attorney for review of legal aspects of the proposal. A standing committee may be charged with preliminary review and recommendations to the superintendent. Formal approval comes from the board of education, after which the application is ready to be submitted to the funding agency.

No single routing system is appropriate for all situations. What must be achieved is a clearance procedure that is simple and expedient, facilitating rather than inhibiting the approval process. If one office is authorized to review and approve proposals internally, the process will be more efficient.

The time involved in routing must be taken into account if the submission deadline is to be met. The entire process may range from one day to two weeks and will increase should a joint proposal be submitted. If an A-95 review is required, additional time must be allocated. Too often a deadline is missed simply because sufficient time for routing was not provided. *There is no such thing as a late proposal*, so grant seekers must allow several extra days for unexpected delays.

The delivery of the application should be planned well in advance of the deadline. Some funding sources will accept a postmark date while others require a receipt date. If the guidelines are unclear, contact should be made with the funding agency.

A receipt for each proposal, indicating the exact date and time the proposal was logged in to the funding sources, should be requested. This written acknowledgement is the only evidence that the application was received on time.

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Follow-Up Activities

If the review is favorable, the applicant will be notified that the funding source wishes to support the proposed project either as initially submitted or with specific modifications. In the first situation, the grantee must prepare to receive and administer the funds. If certain issues must be resolved and modifications made, negotiation between funding source staff and applicant officials precede any award.

Issues necessitating negotiation may deal with any aspect of the proposal, from project scope to individual budget items. The applicant must consider the effects of suggested modifications and budget cuts on the project's goals and decide whether to accept the revised terms and conditions. The award should not be accepted if project integrity is damaged, sufficient support is not available, or resources are inadequate.

Upon completion of satisfactory negotiation with a government agency, an award notice is issued. Once the signed copy of the grant award agreement has been received by the grantee, the funding agency is obligated to release the funds specified in the award. Premature expenditures by the grantee based on a "verbal understanding" can result in undue and sometimes unrecoverable costs.

Several provisions of the award notice warrant particular attention: amount of grant, period of award, assigned grant and project numbers, contract and program officers, and special terms and conditions. This document constitutes a legal agreement between the parties and should be fully understood and adhered to by the grantee.

Foundations are much less formal in their award announcements than are government agencies. A phone call followed by a letter to the grantee's chief administrator often constitutes the official notification. Discussion and clarification may also be a part of the foundation's award process. However, receipt of a check in the amount of the grant replaces the award notice.

What happens if a proposal is not selected for funding? From 70% to 90% of all requests for support are denied. Most applicants simply accept the refusal as an investment of time and energy that did not pay off. True, their effort did not result in an award, but they can learn valuable lessons that might help them be successful in a subsequent attempt.

According to the Freedom of Information Act, a federal agency must provide a grant applicant with an explanation of the decision not to approve a project for funding. This information may take the form of the reviewers' comments, the panel's rating sheets, an agency summary of the evaluation, or a formal hearing. Occasionally, the applicant may be able to find an error in the evaluation process and may be able to argue successfully against a negative judgment. Although formal appeals are not always permitted, many agencies have established boards to consider grant disputes. The grant seeker must always weigh the possible consequences of such an appeal against the potential benefits before filing a formal grievance.

Foundations, unlike government agencies, are under no obligation to discuss the reasons for nonsupport. Small staffs and large numbers of proposals prohibit many foundations from furnishing detailed evaluations. However, some foundations are prepared to do so, hence requests for such information should be made. Most successful grant writers recognize the importance of follow-up activities if their proposal is rejected. The information they gain is seen as beneficial to future endeavors.

Project Management

As the number of grant programs grows, the number and complexity of guidelines, policies, and regulations governing the management of awards increases. Government agencies have led the way in the proliferation of directives; foundations monitor projects less strictly. When dealing with either sector, effective grant management is vital to the successful completion of any project, regardless of size or duration, and is essential for compliance with funding source requirements. All too often a promising project is jeopardized or even fails because of inefficient control of funds or improper administrative practices. Although the award is normally made to the organization and not to the individual project director, the project director may be held accountable to the organization.

Fortunately, most project directors have the assistance of a contract administrator or research office staff experienced in grant management. In many instances the entire operation is handled by such an office. In other situations, the project director is responsible for all financial and administrative tasks. In order for the project director to manage the grant or work with those who do, an awareness of the applicable regulations and an understanding of the special conditions and applications of day-to-day management are necessary. Even though an organization's personnel may coordinate the management activities, the project director must supervise the management process.

Following is information relevant to three aspects of the management process: 1) receipt of payment, 2) record keeping, and 3) reporting.

Receipt of Payment

Of concern to the grantee and project director is the manner in which funds are received. Federal payment methods vary among grantees and depend largely on the type and amount of the award. A cash flow problem can develop if the payment method, financial provisions, and implications are not fully understood.

Initial payments are often not received until weeks after the beginning of the grant period, especially for new grants or small organizations not eligible for a letter of credit. In general, payments are made either in advance (periodic requests or scheduled payment) or as reimbursement for actual expenditures. Grantees must clarify their payment status in order to plan for timely disbursements.

Record Keeping

Maintenance of financial records and related documents is required by the government, generally for a period of three to five years after submission of the final financial report. These records constitute the supporting evidence for grant expenditures and proposal modifications reviewed at the time of audit and are the basis for required periodic financial reports.

Accountability is the watchword when managing a federal grant. All transactions must be documented with justifications in accordance with agency guidelines. Grantees must be familiar with those federal publications covering items such as allowable and unallowable costs, bookkeeping procedures, cost-sharing requirements, equipment purchases, project income, and amendments to the original grant. Federal regulations cover all awards, but individual agencies may impose additional requirements as part of the agreement terms.

Responsibility for record keeping must be clearly defined, and written guidelines must be established and followed. A single secretary or accounts clerk should be given the task of preparing and processing all transactions and maintaining the accounting ledger and financial files. The project director should keep a personal copy of all transactions, even if the organization's contract office maintains the official files. The file should include a copy of the original proposal and budget, correspondence with the federal agency, approvals of proposal

modifications, and financial and technical reports in addition to the daily transactions.

It is not recommended that the project director rely on a monthly computer printout for bookkeeping. A daily ledger should be maintained, since it is the only means of continuous monitoring of funds. It is also crucial to remember that nearly every modification to an award, e.g., transfer of funds between budget categories or extension of grant period, requires the advance written approval of the designated federal contracting officer. No verbal approval or guarantee from any other source should be accepted.

Reporting

Periodic financial and technical reports are required of the receiver of any award. Frequency and format vary among agencies and individual awards. Late or incomplete reports not only cause problems for both the funding source and grantee, but they establish a bad record for future contacts. A report schedule should be arranged by the grantee, with sufficient lead time for compilation of data, typing, reproduction, and delivery. If the periodic reports are done properly, the final reports will be simpler to prepare.

Sponsor program and contract officers are a source of information and assistance on all aspects of grant management. Their expertise should be utilized.

The following publications provide general guidance for management of federal awards.

1. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circulars:
   - A-102—"Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants-in-Aid to State and Local Governments"
   - A-110—"Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-profit Organizations"
2. Federal Management Circulars (FMC):
   - 74-4—"Cost Principles Applicable to Grants and Contracts with State and Local Governments"
   - 73-8—"Cost Principles for Educational Institutions"
   - 73-3—"Cost Sharing on Federal Research"

73-7—"Administration of College and University Research Grants"

3. Education Division General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR)

Summary

The grant process is complex. Active participation in writing and solicitation of external funds will increase the beginner's skills over time. Discussing the subject with successful grant writers and reading literature on the subject will further refine skills.

There is no *one* way of planning, writing, and managing a successful educational project. The guidelines presented in this fastback are those that have been found to be efficient and beneficial to the authors and their colleagues.

The sources of information recommended should serve to build a framework for project planning. The proposal format should provide a guide to developing a grant application. The terminology presented should introduce the beginning grant writer to the jargon used by specialists in the field.

The external funding process is very much a part of the educational scene today, and it will continue to be so in the foreseeable future. It is unlikely that competition for grants will decrease; in all probability it will increase. Presenting workshops on the process, offering courses for credit on university campuses, and familiarizing educators with terminology and procedures through newsletters and training will facilitate active involvement of the education community in the grant process.

Such involvement in careful project planning and implementation is seen as a positive contribution to educational programs. More individuals will soon become active participants in the grant process, more critical thought will go into overall design, innovations will be tried and tested, and education nationwide will benefit.

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